Traces of Jewish life in Ioannina, Greece

THE SYNAGOGUE

The Kahal Kadosh Yashan Synagogue on Justinianos Street is inside the Castle, next to the wall. Probably it was built during the Byzantine times and we don't know if it was the first Synagogue on that site. The building was renovated two times , in 1881 and in 1987.

The building was half-destroyed by the Germans but it survived while the Synagogue outside the castle was completely destroyed. It was the mayor of the city, Demetrios Vlachlidis, who saved the Synagogue, because he told the Germans that the building could be used as Greek library and that the holy books should be in a museum.

The Synagogue is surrounded by a wall. Inside the walls there is a yard. The Synagogue shape is square. Inside there are arches that connect the interior columns. The most important thing is the Ehal, which is the cabinet of the holy books, with a marble façade, and the raised bima in the west. There is a women's section in the north interior balcony. The design of the Synagogue is unique with Venecian and local influences.

THE JEWISH CEMETERY

The new Jewish cemetery of Ioannina was constructed in the 19th century. Before this construction there were other Jewish cemeteries in the city.
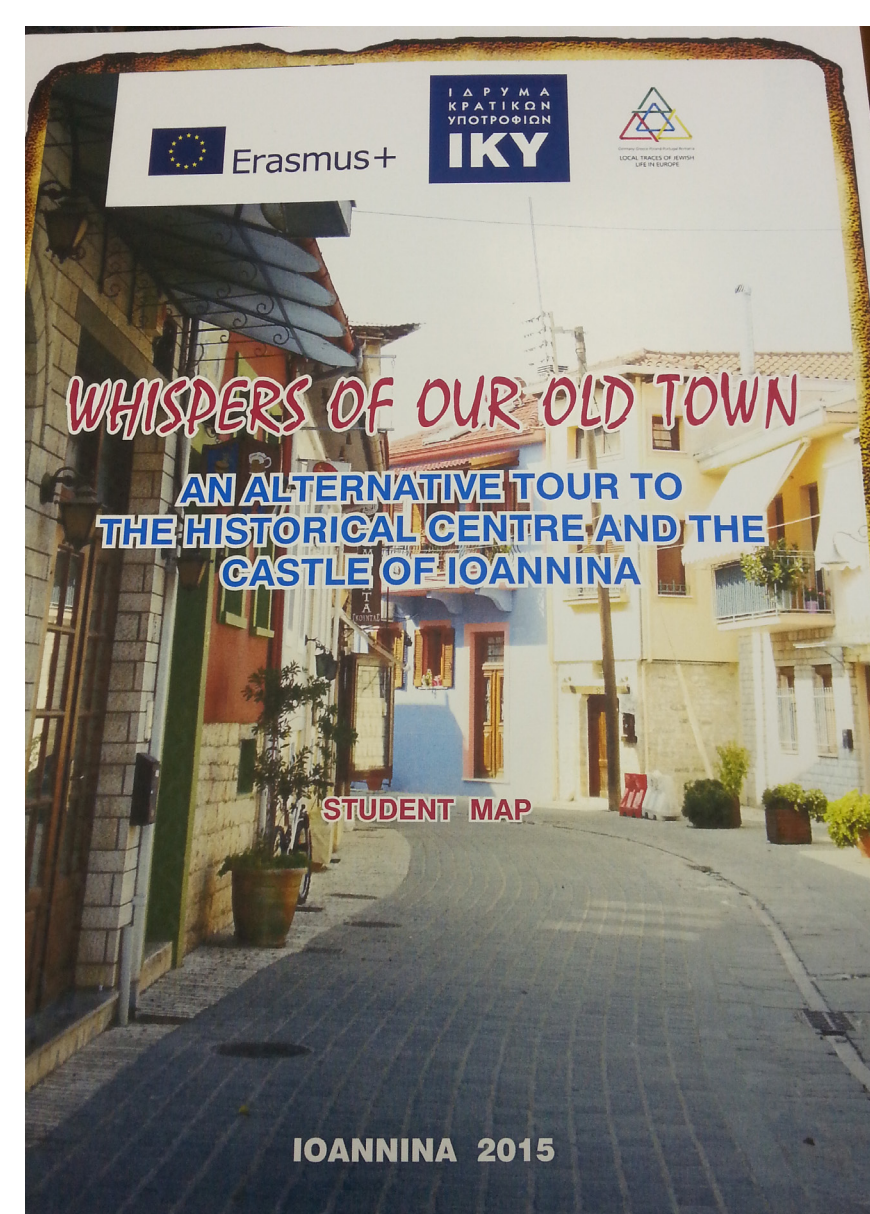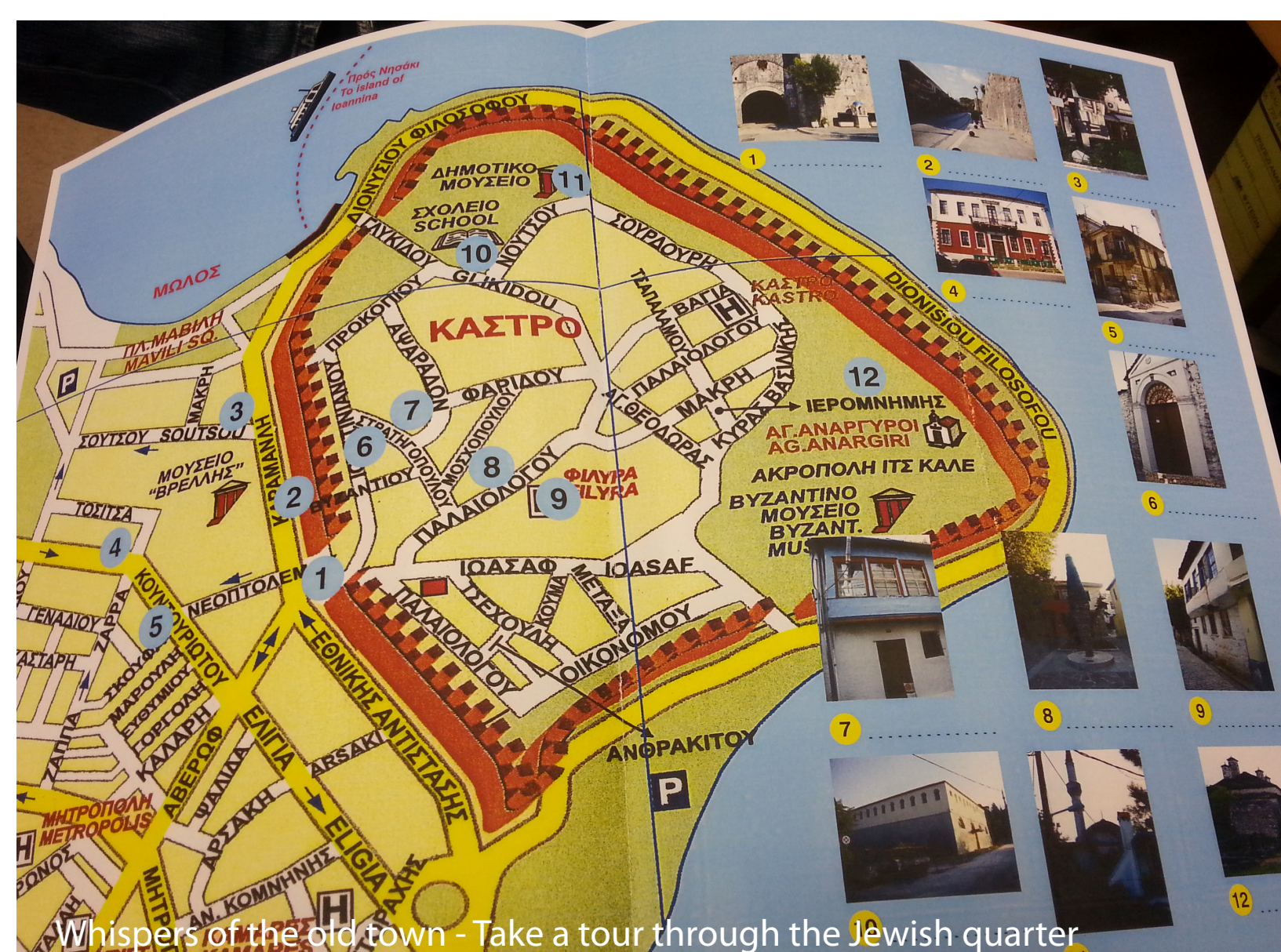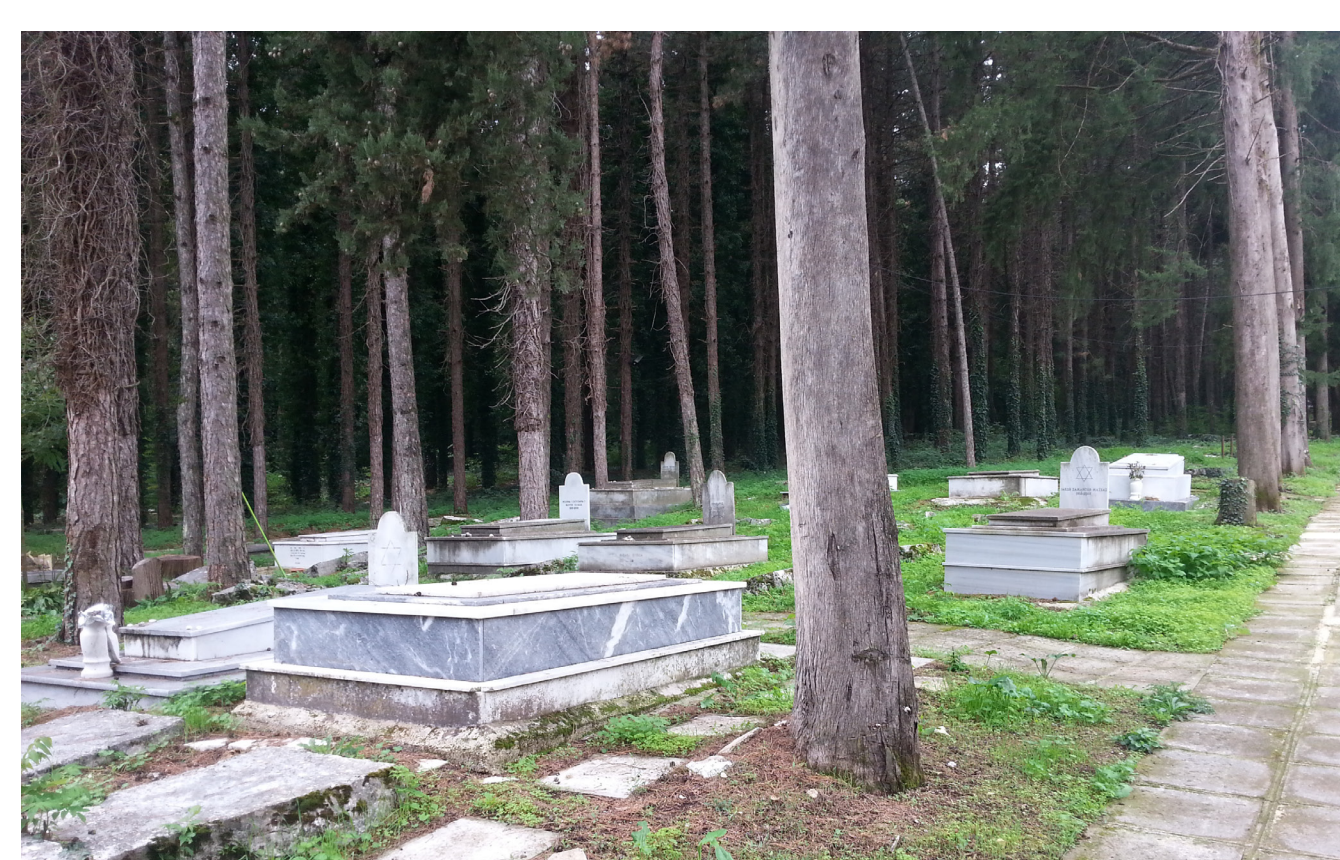
There was an old cemetery approximately 300 meters from the market, in the centre of the city. Nothing remains of it now.

In 1892 there was another Jewish cemetery near Zosimaia School which was desecrated by the Ottoman authorities.

Later, the community had another cemetery, in the neighborhood known as Kalkan.

The Jewish Community of Ioannina bought an area from Ali Pasha in the early 19th century. The bones from all the old Jewish cemeteries were put to the new cemetery, which is still extant today. The community also transferred the tomb stones some of which are extremely old. The oldest one is from 1426.

Today there is a monument for the victims of the Holocaust in the cemetery. The cemetery of Ioannina is used for burials not only for Ioannina Jews but also for Jews for nearby cities.

Whispers of the old town - Take a tour through the Jewish quarter